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## *The Daniloff Deal*

**N**O ONE could look at the pictures of the Soviets' American hostage Nicholas Daniloff exulting in his transfer out of Lefortovo prison and not share in his gratitude and relief. Almost two weeks in his eight-by-ten-foot cell, cut off from contact with family and countrymen except by his jailers' occasional leave, subject to continuous surveillance and repeated, prolonged interrogation by his KGB captors, Mr. Daniloff, the Moscow correspondent for U.S. News & World Report, is immeasurably better off out of prison than he was in it.

But he is still the victim of a cynical and outrageous frame-up. And he is still a hostage. The only way the United States was able to gain his release from prison, it seems, was to acquiesce in this hostage status and to become in some degree a guarantor of it. This is awfully uncomfortable. In explanation it is said that Mr. Daniloff's health was at risk under the conditions of his

imprisonment, that the deal is essentially the same one that was made to gain the release of another American in similar circumstances a few years back, that a kind of pre-arranged series of face-saving steps will in fact lead to Nick Daniloff's release from captivity and that in the imperfect and unbalanced, if not downright rotten, world of U.S.-Soviet dealings, this is the sort of thing you sometimes have to do.

There is bound to be much inquiry into all this in the days ahead; there will be sustained efforts by journalists and politicians and others to establish just what the bargaining was about and whether the American government did the right thing and got the best it could. There are many serious questions, and it will be useful to know more. The only thing we can say with certainty just now is that, glad that Nick Daniloff is out of Lefortovo, we hope—and trust—that the deal that got him out is better than it looks.